

# The Country Church

HOME MISSIONS  
and the  
RURAL PROBLEM

MRS. E. P. BLEDSON,  
CHARLESTON, W. VA.



A Country Church.

PUBLISHED BY THE  
Presbyterian Committee of Publication,  
RICHMOND, VA.      TEXARKANA, ARK.-TEX.



SHALL WE GIVE HIM A CHANCE?

# The Country Church

---

## HOME MISSIONS and the RURAL PROBLEM

---

MRS. E. P. BLEDSOE,  
CHARLESTON, W. VA.

---

PUBLISHED BY THE  
Presbyterian Committee of Publication,  
RICHMOND, VA.,                      TEXARKANA, ARK.-TEX



A WESTERN HOMESTEAD.

# The Country Church.

---

The Problem of the Country Church is inextricably mingled with the Rural Problem.

Strictly speaking, the Country Church has, of itself, no problem at all, but only a *mission*. When she has learned to fulfill this mission properly, she will find both her own and the Rural Problem solved.

## THE RURAL PROBLEM.

The one thing necessary to make both town and open country prosperous, happy and successful is PEOPLE, just people—the right kind of people. Intelligent, God-fearing, righteous in all their dealings. Therefore, the two things complicating the Rural Problem to-day are—

- (1) The rush of country people to towns and cities, and
- (2) The inadequate provision for the intellectual and religious life of those who remain on the soil.

## GROWTH OF CITIES.

The abnormal growth of cities in the last fifty years is not confined to the United States of America, but is universal. The cause is economic, and can be changed in no wise until we restore the economic balance between city and country life. That is, when we succeed in making it just as profitable and pleasant to live in the country as in the city, then, and then only, we will have an equal division of people. They will be equal in numbers and also equal in opportunities for physical, moral and spiritual development.

Three things are sucking the life blood of the country in unhealthy quantities into the towns and cities:

- (1) Introduction of machinery on the farm. It is es-

timated that four men with modern machinery can do the work of fourteen men without the machinery. The other ten men inevitably gravitate to the city for employment.

(2) Manufactories, which invariably group themselves in and around cities, and, like great suction pumps, draw in the unemployed and the discontented from the country.

(3) Social advantages in town and city over those found in the country.

These advantages affect the three vital points in every community—the Home, the School, the Church.

(a) THE HOME.—So far the city offers better homes. The women have every convenience modern science and ingenuity can devise to lighten the burden of housework, while on the farm, in the vast majority of cases, where the men are working out of doors with labor saving machines, the women indoors are toiling unrelieved just as their mothers and grandmothers did before them.

It is not to be wondered, therefore, that women throw practically the whole of the weight of their tremendous influence squarely toward the town and city.

(b) THE SCHOOL.—There are twelve million country children in school in these United States. Only half that number of city children are in school. Yet the city has invested twice as much as the country in public school property, and spends many times as much on equipment and teachers. The average country boy's education costs but \$12.50 a year, while the city spends \$30.78 annually on each pupil. The obvious comment on these facts is, that country people come to town or city to educate their children.

(c) THE CHURCH.—I haven't the figures showing the comparative expenditure of city and country people on their

church buildings and maintenance, but they would be as convincing as those on schools.

There are many substantial, comfortable country churches, where good, efficient men are doing good, efficient work, but the average country church is a one-room, wooden structure, generally wanting paint, and generally out of repair; badly heated and uncomfortable in every physical sense and led up to by roads bad at all seasons, impassable in some. Often the preacher is either an unfledged theological student, preaching on themes of small interest to his hearers, and of which he knows little or nothing himself, while he knows absolutely nothing about the conditions and needs of the people under him; or the preacher may be an old man who is there from necessity rather than from choice.

In either case, the country church is all too apt to be a "temporary" call, a way-station to something beyond. To the young man a place to learn how to preach, so he can get on to a city church—to the old man a place to rest on his way to a better country.

It is no wonder, again, that country people are drawn to the city by better church facilities.

#### NEED FOR INTELLIGENCE AMONG FARMERS.

In past generations the farmer, as a rule, has depended upon brawn rather than upon science. He followed certain customs and traditions without bothering himself to discover if there was any underlying reason or law to justify custom or tradition, or to search out new and better laws for himself.

Scientific farming is rapidly changing all of this. The up-to-date farmer sees the necessity for intelligence as well as for brawn. Farming is becoming a profession, and a

most important and honorable one. The farmer of the future will be educated. Every farm will be a laboratory or experiment station. The farmer will make money, have a comfortable home, good roads connecting him easily with his neighbors, his church and his schools. He will have leisure to read and think. It will be found that farm life furnishes ideal conditions for honest, clean, hard thinking.



A Typical Country Church.

While he is cultivating his farm, the farm will be cultivating him.

When the farmer once begins to use and train his brain, he will save his muscles and dignify his calling. In fact, it will prove itself the highest of all callings. The man in the city works with men, but the farmer works directly under and with God. He deals with no middle men. No matter how diligently he sows, he must look to his partner, God, for increase. There is no chance in sight of a trust or corporation that will ever control the winds and rain, the dew



and sunshine. Farming and the farmer will be transformed, when he realizes that as he learns more and more of the laws of nature in soil and seed, and how to obey them, he is learning more and more of God and how to obey Him. Then it will come to pass that the brightest and best of his sons and daughters will not desert the farm and crowd the cities for that development of mind and personality which farm life hitherto has denied them.

The boy and the girl will be willing to stay and share in the work of the farm when that work employs their mind as well as their muscles; when they are allowed to share likewise in the pleasure and profit of the farm. This will stem the tide of the best material cityward. The man who ploughs, the child who drives the cows home, the woman who cooks and cleans, *all* should, and will, share and share alike in what the farm earns, when that better day comes. Men have never realized on farms the imperative need of women and young people to have a little money of *their own*, to spend their own way. It is a form of independent self-expression which the developing mind demands, and it is for a pitifully small sum of money that many young men and women leave the healthful freshness and beauty of God's out-doors and crowd themselves in hideous places, and work under conditions direful in effect upon lungs and morals—but the money is *their own*. They have *earned* it. It is the much coveted recognition of their individuality in the sum total of things.

#### IMPORTANCE OF THE RURAL PROBLEM.

The prosperity of the nation depends upon the abundance of the country crops, and the character of the nation on the cleanness of the country's conscience.

According to the census of 1910, fifty-odd per cent. of our continental population live in the open country, or in towns of twenty-five hundred population. The country furnishes ninety per cent. of the ministry, and from seventy to eighty per cent. of the business and professional men in the cities. Within the next forty-four years we will have to meet the wants of more than 200,000,000 people. In less than twenty-five years the United States will have 130,000,000. This condition faces *this generation*. And where is there any preparation for it? Only one-half of the land in private ownership is now tilled. That tillage does not produce one-half what the land might be made to yield without losing an atom of its fertility. There is very little of anything approaching intensive farming in the United States except in individual and isolated cases. All of this with an army of another million people marching in plain sight towards us, expecting and demanding to be fed.

The Government should establish a small model farm on its own land in every rural, congressional district; later on, perhaps, in every county in our agricultural States. For only by intelligent and intensive farming can these conditions be met.

"The new crusade should be proclaimed everywhere, from the Executive Chamber, the Editorial Office, the Platform, and above all, from every college class room, and every little school house in the land." (James J. Hill.)

Seeing we are dependent on the country for bread and brains, how foolish to neglect the study and actual solution of the Rural Problem? Just so, for many centuries we have neglected the child, forgetting that out of the child must grow the men and women for each generation.

Again, there are about seventy times as many agricultu-

rists as lawyers in the United States. Yet the lawyers exert a vastly greater civic influence, and greatly outnumber farmers in most law making bodies. There are about fifty million rural people, largely in farm households. The average farmer in 1910 paid taxes on 138 acres of land, besides other property. Why does not the farmer wield more



"There Are Many Like This."

influence in due proportion to his wealth and numbers? Train his intelligence, teach him how to co-operate, and develop in him a *social conscience*, or consciousness, and his influence will be supreme.

Now we have our Rural Problem, the cause of it, the importance of it, with suggestions for its solutions. To what, or to whom, shall we look for the solution?

#### THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY FOR USING THE CHURCH IN SOLVING THE RURAL PROBLEM.

"The Country Church is the most important single agency in the development of the Country Life Movement in its

higher reaches—and the Pastor is the most important asset of the Country Church.”

Again, “the social regeneration of the country is the opportunity of the church. None greater has ever faced her.” What is she doing with it?

To-day the two strongest organizations in the Country Churches are the Sunday School and Women’s Societies. That is to say, this supremely important work, the basis, as we have seen, of the nation’s prosperity, and the nation’s character for righteousness, is left by *men* to rest upon the foundation of the efforts of women and children. Back of every forward movement for the forward march of the Kingdom of God stands the power, the urgency, and the initiative of God Himself, but He must have human beings to act upon and through. His constant call is for *men* as leaders. Once He searched Jerusalem with candles for a man to stand in the breach. At times He has been compelled to use women, as Deborah, “when the leaders failed in Israel”; but, she plainly says to Barak, the son of Ahinoam, who, refusing to lead himself, reluctantly follows the leadership of a woman—“the honor,” she says, “shall not be thine, for God has delivered Sisera into the hands of a woman.” And once again, when leaders had failed among priests and people in Israel, God is compelled to express himself through a little child. Always these periods in the development of Israel, when men, the natural leaders, fail in their duty and calling—mark a retrograde movement, and tread close upon the heels of a period of heavy judgments. It is just as true to-day in the effect on the life and efficiency of the Country Churches, as it was in the days of Deborah and Samuel.

## FAILURE OF COUNTRY CHURCHES.

Note the statement. "One-fourth of the country churches are growing; one-fourth are standing still; one-fourth are dying; and one-fourth are dead." Is there any connection between this statement and the one above, that men have left the leadership of God's Kingdom in the country to the women and children?

The following is an extract from the Report of the Com-



A Country Burying Ground.

mission on Country Life, appointed by President Roosevelt.

"Any consideration of the Problem of Rural Life that leaves out of account the function and possibilities of the church, and of related institutions, would be grossly inadequate. This is not only because, in the last analysis the Country Life Problem is a moral problem, or that in the best development of the individual, the great motives and results are religious and spiritual, but because from the pure sociological point of view the church is *fundamentally* a necessary institution in country life. In a peculiar way the

church is intimately related to the agricultural industry. The work and life of the farm are closely bound together, and the institutions of the country react on that life and on one another more intimately than they do in the city. This gives the rural church a position of *peculiar difficulty* and one of *unequaled opportunity*. The time has come when the church must take large leadership, both as an institution, and through its pastors, in the social reorganization of country life." Let us take these two phrases, "peculiar difficulty" and "unequaled opportunity," for thoughtful examination.

#### PECULIAR DIFFICULTIES OF THE COUNTRY CHURCH.

(1) Farm tenancy or absentee landlordism. In the South more than half the farms are cultivated by tenants. In Georgia and Mississippi two-thirds of all the farms are so cultivated. In Virginia and Louisiana alone there has been a decrease in farm tenancy. This gives a shifting population, and landless, homeless men will not take an abiding interest in church or school, good roads, or any community interest. Not only is there injury to permanent growth of community enterprises, at the head of which *should* stand the church, but the interest of agriculture suffers also.

"In communities or countries overwhelmed by farm tenancy there is uniformly a steady deterioration of soils and farm properties, decreasing average per acre yields of all crops whatsoever, and increasing difficulty in maintaining country schools and churches."

"Give a man secure possession of a bleak rock, and he will turn it into a garden. Give him a nine year's lease of a garden, and he will convert it into a desert." Christian civilization is rooted and grounded in the home-owning, home-loving, home-defending instinct.

The church has to reckon with this difficulty in many communities. In her plans and specifications for building up community interests and co-operation she must allow for the shifting sands of a tenant farmer.

She can overcome this by holding up continuously the advantages of ownership of land, as Booker Washington has



Not an Unusual Sight.

done, and is doing with the negro race. The negro now has possession of twenty million acres of land, a territory larger than the State of South Carolina. Since 1900 negro farm owners in the South have increased seventeen per cent. Nearly one-fourth of them own the farms they cultivate. In Maryland, Oklahoma, Kentucky, Florida and Virginia they own more than half of them; in Virginia more than three-fifths of them. We can learn something from this leader of his people, and from the people themselves, humble and ignorant though many may be, in their wisdom and docility in being led.

This difficulty is increased by land speculations which begun in 1873. This, too, makes impossible a stable and permanent country community life. Holding the land only long enough to receive the coveted raise in market value and then moving on to newer lands has been the universal practice. Here is the church's opportunity for leadership. If she fails to take it, she will be left high and dry. If she takes her proper place, and performs her proper function of leading men away from this shiftless, homeless, money-making habit into a stable, home-owning, community interest-life, she will fasten herself on to the community life with hooks of steel.

(2) Difficulty of getting farmers to co-operate and organize.

The farmer is an intense individualist, and does not easily combine with others. The man who owns land has been accustomed to believe, and to prove himself, absolutely independent of every other man. He farms as his father, and his father's father before him, and, as a rule, resents the suggestion that there is any better way of doing things. He is slow to learn that he and his farm and family no longer represent an independent unit; he is not an integer, but the mere fractional part of a community-whole, every other part of which is vitally related to him, and to each other. And more than that, even his community is not an independent whole, but a part, and an infinitesimally small part, of a still greater whole. When he buys his machinery, sells his produce, transports it to market, he runs head foremost into great combinations, solid organizations, that grind him to powder industrially, while, as a rule, he refuses to combine with his own class for mutual protection.

Two forces are at work, which eventually will break up



this hard, custom-encrusted surface of the independent-farmer-individualist.

One of these forces is brewing in agricultural colleges, extension work and rural high schools. The first agricultural college in the United States was founded at Cleveland, Ohio. There are now sixty-six of these colleges, and many experiment stations in all the States and territories. Seven States in the South require by law agricultural instruction in rural schools. This force we call education.

The other force *must* proceed from the church of the living God. Some call it religion; some call it socialization. It is that profound sense of *unity* which should prevail above everything else, and pervade all else, in a body of men who own to faith in one common Lord and Saviour, the giver and source of one common spiritual life. It was the deep sense of reality and vitality of this union that in apostolic days welded together in one compact organism the multitude of them that believed, making them of one heart and soul, and not one said that aught of the things he possessed was his own, but all was held in subordination to the community interest.

The church's problem is to restore, preserve and make active in the community this spirit of union and co-operation, breaking up the selfish units and recombining them around a new and common center. Call that center the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, or call it the highest community interest, it *must* proceed from Him, and continually gather back to Him as its source and inspiration, else the organism will inevitably disintegrate, break up into units again, and revert back to individualism, or self-centers. The church must supply something to attract and unite community life. Such a "point of contact" was the old-fashioned singing

school, camp-meetings, etc. The Passion Play at Ober Ammagau is a standing illustration of what a strong community interest, uniting all the people, will do.

(3) Difficulty arising from lack of church co-operation.

While a great deal is being said about over-churched communities, and there are many instances where this is true,



Typical of Remote Regions.

it is not urged that in every community there should be just one church, if there is necessity for more. Oftentimes one church is able to meet the religious needs of a community where three or four are failing because of a lack of fraternity and co-operation. Denominational rivalry is good, if it is a rivalry in good works and not merely rivalry for a denominational advantage. The spirit in which the church work is done is everything. Prejudice, jealousy, envy, strife are things that kill. Speaking of denominations Dr. Henry Wallace, Chairman of the Country Life Commission, says:

"We have them as a heritage from the past. We love our own because of old and dear associations and ties of blood and kindred; but we are very narrow-minded and unworthy disciples of John Knox if we allow our denominational associations to hinder our work of saving souls. If Christian ministers, whose congregations overlap, cannot agree to join in taking stock in their community and saving the unsaved, but become jealous of each other in gathering the harvest of souls, there is not likely to be much of a harvest. Denominations we have had in the past. We have them now, and we shall have them. I would not like to hear that the people of my State or of any other State had all become United Presbyterians. If it were so, church politics would develop alarmingly. If the whole Church were one, men would divide, would attend different houses of worship, and there would be war between the factions just as there is war between the factions in the Catholic Church to-day. There is no man and no set of men holy and unselfish enough to be trusted with the great power that would come from one universal church."

(4) Difficulty from non-resident pastors in Country communities.

Absentee pastors are as inadequate as absentee landlords. Of eighteen thousand country churches of the Southern Baptists less than one in fifty has a parsonage, and not more than one in twenty has a pastor who resides in the community. That is to say, the largest proportion of country churches are without anything like adequate pastoral service. Now this condition is not peculiar to Baptists. I happen to have the figures for this denomination; the story is the same in all—perhaps worse in some.

"The greatest need in the country church is a resident pastor." Not a mere preacher, but a pastor. Now a pastor is a shepherd, one who feeds. In the East, where we get this figure, the shepherd most literally *lives* with his sheep. Day and night he *resides* with them. He knows them all by name. They know his voice, and they follow him. If night overtakes the flock upon some desolate hillside, or down in a dark valley, the shepherd keeps watch and guard while they sleep under the silent stars. If he gathers them into some common fold, he carefully examines *each sheep*, pours in oil and wine where scratched and bruised by the hard day's journey, refreshes them with an overflowing cup of crystal cool water, then lays him down at the door of the fold, so none can enter to harm the sleeping sheep except over the body of the shepherd. If necessary the Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He is their Leader, their Provider, their Defender. Can there be such a thing as an absentee pastor?

I cannot forbear to insert here a familiar but most pertinent and instructive quotation from John Ruskin. He is analyzing the famous passage from Lydidas.

"Last came and last did go,  
The pilot of the Gallilean Lake."

He explains Milton's curious phrase "blind mouths."

"These two monosyllables express the precisely accurate contrarities of right character in the two great offices of the church, those of Bishop and Pastor.

A Bishop means a person who *sees*;

A Pastor means one who *feeds*.

The most unbishoply character a man can have is therefore to be blind.

The most unpastoral is, instead of feeding, to want to be fed,—to be a Mouth. Take these two reverses together and you have “Blind Mouths.”

“Nearly all the evils in the church have arisen from



Bethany Church and Manse, Atlanta Presbytery.

Bishops desiring *power* more than *light*. They want authority, not outlook, whereas, their real office is not to rule, though it may be vigorously to exhort and rebuke; it is the King's office to rule; the Bishop's office is to oversee the flock, to number it sheep by sheep; to be ready always to

give a full account of it. Now, it is clear he cannot give account of the souls if he has not so much as numbered the bodies of his flock. The first thing, therefore, that a Bishop (or a Presbyter) has to do is at least to put himself in a position in which, at any moment, he can obtain the history from childhood of every living soul in his diocese (community) and of its present state. Down in that back street Bill and Nancy are knocking each other's teeth out! Does the Bishop know all about it? Has he his eye upon them? Has he *had* his eye upon them? Can he circumstantially explain to us how Bill got into the habit of beating Nancy about the head? If he cannot, he is no Bishop, though he had a mitre as high as Salisbury steeple. He is no Bishop,—he has sought to be at the helm instead of of the mast-head; he has no sight of things. 'Nay,' you say, 'it is not his duty to look after Bill in the back street.' What! the fat sheep that have full fleeces—you think it's only those he should look after while (go back to your Milton) 'the hungry sheep look up and are not fed, besides what the grim wolf, with privy paw' (Bishops knowing nothing about it) 'daily devours apace and nothing said?'

'But that is not our idea of a Bishop.' Perhaps not; but it was Paul's and it was Milton's."

I ask again is it possible for this idea to be fulfilled in an itinerant, non-resident pastor? Can he so shepherd four flocks, or three, or two? There are two ways in which the church can solve this difficulty.

First, by eliminating all unnecessary churches. A community could readily support one resident pastor, and he could shepherd in just such an ideal manner one united flock, co-operating together. In some over-churched communities there has been a federation of the different churches.

Each church retaining its denominational relationship and its organization, but employing a minister in common.

Second, by training men for the work in rural communities. Here we have hit the very heart of the problem, *a trained country ministry*. We could dispense with the theologian, but we need men with a good working knowledge of the English Bible, and a "working knowledge" means knowledge tried out in one's own experience; and a thorough training in the conditions, needs, and possibilities of rural communities. Such men would solve *all* the problems involved, for here we would get our trained leader at the very heart of things; a leader whom the people have been trained for centuries to follow. There is no institution at present for training rural preachers. Attention is being called to it in many ways. The Board of Home Missions of the Northern Presbyterian Church is leading the way among the denominations, being the first to establish a department to deal with country churches and conditions. There is a growing, insistent demand for *trained* men, the genuine article that will wear well. If the church is wise, she will heed this call and will hasten to furnish the kind of men who will satisfy the demand.

#### UNEQUALLED OPPORTUNITY OF THE CHURCH.

A careful consideration of these difficulties, their causes and suggested remedies, will make the opportunities and responsibilities of the church stand out with startling distinctness, that he that runs may read. Even the world, which has been wont to scorn and scoff at the "other worldliness" of the church and deny her claims to Divine wisdom and power is now turning pathetically to the church, and saying, "We have tried all of this world's remedies, and re-

sources, and have failed; all the wisdom and power in organized government and philanthropy will not remedy the awful conditions which threaten the very foundation of society. If you have anything beyond this, *now* is the time to prove it," and *NOW* is the time to prove it. It is a matter of self-preservation, as well as the preservation of society. Unless the church makes herself a positive factor in the building up of either urban or rural community life, into real Christian civilization, she will have to get out. She must make better men, better citizens, teach them how to combine to attain better community life everywhere, under all conditions. Unless she learns to *know* and adapt herself to these new and varying conditions, she dies. Salt is good, but if it lose its savor! Life, any kind of life, is just "correspondence with environment." When a plant, or an animal, or a man, or a church, corresponds inadequately with environment, they stand still. Development is arrested. They grow sickly and become useless. When they cease to correspond altogether, they die. This is law and it binds together and applies to all life, vegetable, animal, spiritual, in every department of the Kingdom of God. He has never exempted His Church from this universal law, though we often act as if He had given us a special dispensation.

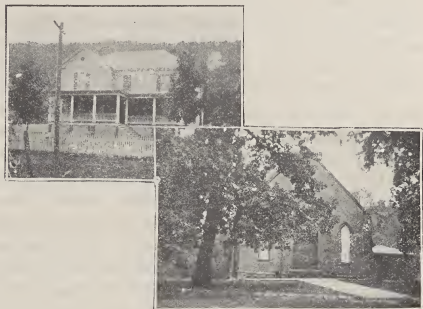
If the home is the foundation of society, or community life, the church is the heart. She is the dynamo which should supply ideals, suggestions, motives and *power* to realize these ideals, suggestions and motives in every community activity, whether economic, social or purely religious.

#### THE CHURCH MUST CHANGE HER POINT OF VIEW.

The idea that the church came into the world to be ministered unto, and not to minister, or that her main business



is to call the people to "services," and not to *serve* the people, will not answer. The church must learn that her right of existence in the eternal scheme of things is in direct ratio to the thoroughness with which she understands and acts within her appointed place and sphere, which is a *servant*



New Monmouth Church and Manse, Lexington Presbytery.

in *service*. Her function is that of light to reveal corruption, and salt to arrest corruption. The light must be set upon a hill to shine, the salt must be vigorously applied to the corruptions of a community to preserve. How to get the right point of view? Go back to her Lord, who died to give her birth, and lived to show her how to live. He proved what He *was* by what He *did*. So must she.

There was no "church" in Jesus Christ's day, that is, in our common understanding of the term. No building, no services, no organization. But He Himself was The Church.

And He did not sit down in one place and call on men to come at stated periods and go through forms of worshipping Him; then lock the doors until the stated period came around again. Jesus Christ was a peripetic church. His activities were confined to the four walls of no building. He worshipped God by doing His will. He came to seek and to save the lost; to minister, not to be ministered to. He sought out the concrete needs of individuals in every community He entered into, and promptly served those needs. And he said to all who received Him and accepted Him as their leader, "Follow me; do as I do." He did not wait for people to come to Him. He went to the people. His final goal and ideal was not a church, nor *the* church; but the Kingdom of God, whose entrance requirement is the possession of a new life in Him, and individual responsibility consisted in seeing that the life functioned in strict conformity with the laws of growth which He carefully laid down for its development.

The church must learn these fundamental facts if she is to hold on to her candlestick and fulfill her mission of giving light and savor to the world. She must widen her narrowed walls to take in not only all bodies working in the name of Jesus Christ, but she must take in Jesus' ideal, which is nothing less than the Kingdom of God, and she His instrument to bring that kingdom to pass on the earth. Not to save souls to be translated to Heaven, but to save souls that they may bring about the rule of Heaven here upon earth. She must cease emphasizing *services*, and serve the people, the common people, as her Master did. She must quit preaching moral essays and promulgating rules of conduct, and preach the Gospel, which is the *fact* of the Incarnation, Death and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the offer of Eternal Life in Him; and she must *teach* the funda-

mental laws which govern the growth and activities of this new spiritual life; then morality and conduct will take care of themselves.

The Church must take a more charitable attitude towards recreations and social intercourse, and not turn over this great department of "Social Psychology" to the great adversary of souls. Someone has said, "Let me make the songs of the Nation and I care not who makes the laws," and Satan says, "Let me furnish the amusements of the community, and I care not how many churches you build or what creeds you preach." The Church must redeem some of the harmless amusement and recreations for the use of her own people and not give the devil a monopoly. The Church can be made the social center of the community by its approval of every form of natural, healthful amusement. "If the farmers' ungodly boys play baseball on Sabbath, it is usually the Church's fault. If the preacher will persuade the farmer (which he can do if he goes at it right) to give the boys Saturday afternoon to play, and goes and sees that the game is played on the square, the boys—unless they are hopelessly ungodly and of an ungodly breed—will go to hear him preach on the Sabbath."

And what was the attitude of Jesus Christ toward social intercourse and amusements? Wherever He was invited He went. We have no record that He ever refused an invitation. He went in spite of the fact that He did not always approve of the spirit and methods of entertainment. He watched the children playing in the streets and the young people dancing on the green with evident sympathy and enjoyment. There is no word of reproof, only a gentle word of correction of the spirit in which it was done. How much the church, religious people, have yet to learn, both of human

nature and of God as expressed in social life! If anything seems wrong with the social customs in your community, don't condemn the custom necessarily, but *go*, mix in, add your own personality and wholesomeness, which means holiness, and change the spirit of the thing; or, if it is bad in itself, put something better in its place. There is a great wide field for effective service here for men and women who



Mt. Zion Church, Harmony Presbytery.

have caught the vision of the "Social Christ" and will translate Him into the amusements of community life. If there is a room in the house where the air has become foul, vitiated, maybe, by some deadly gas, you do not spend your time and energy in locking the doors, chinking up cracks and crevices and warning your children away. If you do, you have lost to your family's use one of your best rooms; you have preserved in your midst a deadly thing, and you will find by sad experience that you cannot so lock and chink, watch and warn, but that some of the direful fumes will escape into

every other room in your house. No, you do not do that. But you open wide every window and door and let in God's sunshine and fresh air. You overcome bad air with good air, and so should we do with our places of amusement.

The problem of every community is to make things *wholesome*, turn in the spirit of Jesus Christ in such abundant measure that all the evil will be expelled, and the good conserved for the glory of God. Drive out all that appeals to the lower flesh nature, and *use* all that can be made to appeal to the higher nature. "The Christian religion was founded upon a fellowship of plain men and women with the Son of God."

The business of the church is not just to save souls, and then turn them loose in a hostile environment, with no provision for nourishment and growth. The mother travails in birth pangs for the life of her child, but how tenderly she cherishes the new born life; how carefully she surrounds it with warmth and pure air, feeds it with wholesome food, watches and trains it for useful service. Just this is Christ's method. First, regenerate the soul through the presentation of the *facts* of the gospel; certainly that comes first. Then through the proper organization and activities of other regenerated souls make the environment fit for the new-born soul to live in. See to it that it is conducive to health and vigorous growth. It is this throwing the influence and strength for righteousness out into the community life, allowing it to act upon that community life, as light and salt, which constitutes what we call to-day the Social Gospel. It's not only a gospel to be preached, but a life to be lived, just as Jesus lived it.

## THE SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM.

(a) *Adequate Leadership*.—Here, as everywhere, regeneration must come from within. Outside forces may act upon country life, but the response and impulse must come from the people themselves. The whole matter reverts to a question of leadership, and leadership involves, not only special preparation, ability, tact and great wisdom, but the willingness to pay the price. The first problem then is to discover, enlist and train local leaders. Where shall we look for them? Where, indeed, but from the home, the school and the church. The home must furnish the raw material, the school and the church must manufacture this material into a useful product.

So far the universities have neglected this important field, while the teachers' colleges and normal schools of the country have not realized their function to prepare men and women for the special duties of rural life; and more amazing still, the theological seminaries have not thought it worth while to select and prepare men to take charge of country parishes. The fact is, our schools are largely responsible for ineffective farming, lack of ideas and drift to towns. Any form of education to be effective must reflect the daily life and interest of a community. We teach country children the dead languages, but never introduce them to the marvelous beauties of the living and various language which nature speaks to those who know how to hold communion with her visible form. We need to so arrange and adapt the curriculum in our country schools as to make boys and girls "rural minded," make them love country life, and have a vision of its possibilities. Then the teachers in our rural schools will have to be themselves "rural minded," and know enough about the possibilities of country life to love it. These teachers should

be themselves leaders in all that concerns and elevates rural life; the social engineers, as it were, to make practical the ideals from the pulpit. The social center of every community should be the church and the school. All roads should lead hither, *and they should be good roads.*

But, as we have seen, the natural leader in every community is the parson; as the word indicates, he represents the



Mt. Zion Manse, Harmony Presbytery.

church, and is, or should be, the chief "person" in the community. It is a fact that ministers have largely lost their rightful place as leaders, because they refuse to see the trend of public opinion, and the immediate needs of the people in the pews. They must stop preaching to theological professors, and preach to farmers.

We need stronger personalities in the country pulpits and parsonages. Says John R. Mott: "Follow far enough any one of the grave problems now before the country, and you will come to one point, *the need of better men.* The preacher

can no longer wrap himself in his "sacred calling" as with a garment. He may be "reverend," but he will not be revered simply because of his calling. He must make that calling and election sure by proving himself to be a dominating personality, a force genuinely useful and indispensable to the real needs of the community. In leadership, personality is a more necessary factor than preparation, but personality plus preparation will make the ideal leader."

*(b) Approved Methods of Work.*

It is not necessary to prove the importance of this. Good methods are as important in church work as in any other department of human endeavor. One of the chief causes of failure in many rural congregations has been the failure to recognize this fact and to seek out and make use of the most approved methods. The church affairs have been permitted to drag along year after year in the same old way. Every community has its own conditions and problems, but methods that have been successful in other places can be modified and successfully employed if there is a will to do so. Not all rural churches are dying. Many of the most vigorous churches in our denomination, with up-to-date Sabbath schools, missionary societies, and brotherhoods, are in the country.

*(c) Modern Methods of Finance.*

The Country Church cannot be run on loose change. The Every Member Canvass with the weekly envelope should be introduced and worked. Men should be selected to look after the financial affairs of the church who are capable and willing. The pastor should be paid monthly and other bills should be paid when due. There should be the same business ability displayed in church work as in the conduct of any other business enterprise. The introduction of approved



business methods in the affairs of many a congregation would effect a revolution in the condition of that congregation.

Recently in one of the magazines there was an article about a rich man who purchased a number of old New England farms that out of them he might form an estate. He employed as superintendent a young man lately graduated from an agricultural school, a young man who was especially interested in the science of fruit raising. Upon the estate

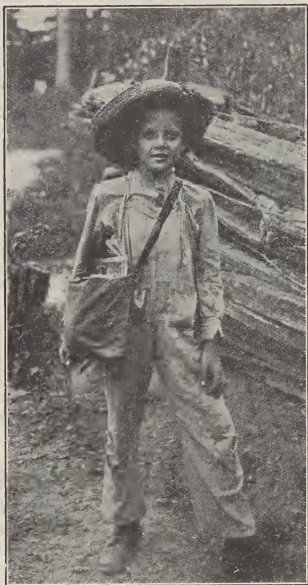


A Country Road on Sunday.

were several old orchards. The trees, untended, decayed, seemingly worthless. The owner ordered them cut down and burned. The superintendent, however, asked permission to make an experiment with the old trees. He had them carefully pruned. He cut out the dead wood. Used other methods known to the skilled orchardist, and to the surprise of all, the orchards began to manifest new life. He continued his experiments until at the time the article was written the trees were bearing and had produced this year several hundred bushels of valuable fruit.

Might not a like work be accomplished in many of our country congregations now weakened and about to die. This brings us back to their original proposition. The key to the solution of the rural problem is the Country Church, and the

key to the solution of the Country Church problem is the country pastor.



"For how shall I go up to my father, if the lad be not with me."—Gen. 44: 34.

# Home Mission Pamphlets

A series of interesting and informing pamphlets dealing with the special Home Mission problems of the Southern Presbyterian Church.

32 pages illustrated. Price, 5c. each, postpaid.

Texas-Mexican Missions.....Mrs. R. D. Campbell.  
The Country Church.....Mrs. E. P. Bledsoe.  
Our Work Among the Negroes...Miss S. O'H. Dickson.  
The Highlanders of the South...Miss Anne H. Rankin.  
The Frontier.....Rev. S. M. Glasgow.  
Concerning the Foreigner.....Mrs. D. B. Cobbs  
Our Indian Work.....Mrs. Bella McC. Gibbons.

## 50,000 Subscribers Wanted for the Missionary Survey

The **Missionary Survey** is the General Assembly's official Church magazine.

The reading matter and illustrations forming its contents are supplied by the Assembly's four Executive Committees, giving the latest authentic reports from the active forces of these committees in the field at Home and Abroad.

The **Missionary Survey** is therefore a faithful mirror of all the Assembly's benevolent activities.

Its contents are not only of an informing and educational character, but also of highly suggestive and inspirational value.

The magazine is helpful in this way to individuals, to families, to societies, to leaders and workers in every department of the Church.

No wide-awake Presbyterian home, interested in the Church's work and success, will be without this monthly visitor.

Subscription price, 75c per year.

Clubs of 5 or more, 50c.

Valuable premiums for new subscribers.

Write for sample copies and premium list.

Help yourself—help your neighbor—help your pastor—help your church—by helping the **MISSIONARY SURVEY** to find its way into all the homes of our Church. You could not do a more gracious work.

Address **PRESBYTERIAN COMMITTEE  
OF PUBLICATION**

Box 1176, Richmond, Virginia.

### BEST BOOKS ON HOME MISSION PROBLEMS.

- Immigrant Forces.....W. P. Shrever.  
Paper, 35c.; Cloth, 50c.
- The New America.....Mary Clark Barnes.  
Paper, 35c.; Cloth, 50c.
- America, God's Melting Pot.....Mrs. L. G. Craig.  
Paper, 25c.
- Comrades from Other Lands.....Mrs. Dimock.  
Paper, 35c.
- Indian and Spanish Neighbors.....Julia H. Johnston.  
Paper, 35c.; Cloth, 50c.
- The Burden of the City.....Horton.  
Paper, 35c.; Cloth, 50c.
- The Challenge of the City.....Josiah Strong.  
Paper, 35c.; Cloth, 50c.
- The Twentieth Century City.....Josiah Strong.  
Paper, 35c.; Cloth, 50c.
- Boys of the Street and How to Win Them..Chas. Stelzle.  
Cloth, 50c.
- Christianity's Storm Center.....Chas. Stelzle.  
Cloth, \$1.00.
- Christianity and the Social Crisis.....Rauschenbush.  
Cloth, 60c.
- The Church and Young Men.....Cressy.  
Cloth, \$1.25.
- Jesus Christ and the Social Question.....Peabody.  
Cloth, 60c.
- The Church and Labor.....Charles Stelzle.  
Cloth, 50c.
- Messages to Working Men.....Charles Stelzle.  
Cloth, 50c.
- Letters from a Working Man.....Charles Stelzle.  
Cloth, \$1.00.
- At Our Own Door.....S. L. Morris.  
Paper, 35c.; Cloth, 50c.
- Call of the Home Land.....A. L. Phillips.  
Paper, 35c.; Cloth, 50c.
- Galax Gatherers .....E. O. Guerrant.  
Cloth, \$1.00.
- Rural Church and Country Betterment.....Rubert.  
Cloth, \$1.00.
- Country Church and Rural Problems.....Butterworth.  
Cloth, \$1.00.
- Country Boys and Girls.....McKeever.  
Cloth, 75c.
- Conservation of Life in Rural Districts.....Robertson.  
Cloth, 25c.

### FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

- Best Things in America.....Miss Crowell.  
Paper, 25c.
- Coming Americans .....Miss Crowell.  
Paper, 25c.
- Grandma Bright's Home Mission Evenings..S. O'H. Dickson.  
Paper, 15c.
- Wigwam Evenings .....Eastman.  
Paper, 25c.
- The Finding Out Club. Paper, 25c.
- Old Country Hero Series. Illustrated. Cloth, 25c.
- Just Plain Peter. Paper, 25c.

Order from

**PRESBYTERIAN COMMITTEE OF PUBLICATION.**

Richmond, Va.

Texarkana, Ark.-Tex.